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PATRIOTS

BY LENNOX ROBINSON



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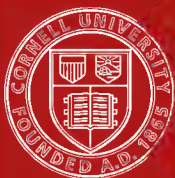
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Patriots; a play in three acts, by Lennox



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PATRIOTS

P A T R I O T S

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY LENNOX ROBINSON

MAUNSEL & COMPANY, LTD.

DUBLIN AND LONDON

1912

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TO
THE JAMES NUGENTS
OF HISTORY

Costello. It's a statue of Liberty Brian Hosty was talking about in the commencement.

Mannion. Ah, who the hell cares about liberty? . . .

THE IMAGE (*Lady Gregory*).

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CHARACTERS.

JAMES NUGENT.

ANN (*his Wife*).

ROSE (*their Child*).

BOB }
HARRY } (*ANN's brothers*).

DAN SULLIVAN

MRS. SULLIVAN.

WILLIE (*their Son*).

FATHER KEARNEY.

PETER O'MAHONY.

JIM POWELL.

TWO YOUNG MEN.

PATRIOTS

ACT I.

SCENE.—ANN's sitting-room over the shop in a country town in Ireland. The room is well furnished, and in fairly good taste. ANN is forty-four years old—but her hair is already grey. She is capable and methodical, a splendid business woman, and she has lived with two fools for eighteen years, so she speaks as little as possible. O'MAHONY is older than her in years, but appears younger. They are seated at a table with books and papers before them. They are making up the half-yearly accounts of the shop. It is evening.

O'MAHONY. Six hundred and forty pounds seven and eight pence ?

ANN. No. Six hundred and thirty-seven pounds seventeen and eight pence.

O'MAHONY. Dear me, I can't find the mistake. This is the third time I have gone over it.

ANN (*taking some papers from him and pushing a book towards him*). Read the items out to me.

O'MAHONY. Wolff, twenty-five pounds ten ; Brady, sixteen pounds two and six pence ; Farmer, fifty-seven pounds ; Burke, fourteen pounds ten and sixpence ; Caughlan, twenty-one pounds sixteen and sixpence ; Maybury—

ANN. You have Caughlan twenty-three pounds six and sixpence. That's where you're wrong.

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O'MAHONY. Have I really? How stupid!

ANN *finishes the accounts with a few decisive pen-strokes.*

ANN. Now, it's finished.

O'MAHONY. I congratulate you, Ann; it's by far the best half-year you've ever had.

ANN. Yes, it's been very good.

O'MAHONY. Three eighty—yes—nearly four hundred better than this time last year.

ANN. And there are really not so many outstanding debts—ones that I'm anxious about I mean—except the Clarkes.

O'MAHONY. And of course the Sullivans.

ANN. Oh, I've made up my mind about the Sullivans. They've got to go.

O'MAHONY. Go?

ANN (*calmly*). If they won't pay their rent they've got to be put out.

O'MAHONY. It's not that they won't, it's that they can't.

ANN. Well, it doesn't make any difference to me. Ten pounds is all I've got out of that house in Main Street during the last three years. That's not good enough, Peter. It's a fine house in one of the best positions in the town. If I put them out and do it up thoroughly, I can get double the rent the Sullivans are supposed to be giving me.

O'MAHONY. Do you really mean this, Ann?

ANN. Of course I do.

O'MAHONY. Sullivan has had a long struggle.

ANN. It's quite easy to make a good living out of the grocery business; I've proved that.

O'MAHONY. Well, you know they say that it's because you're doing so well, that he's doing badly.

ANN. Yes, I have got the best part of the custom of the town . . . It's Sullivan's own fault. He had it and he lost it by laziness and drink. I won it by downright hard work.

O'MAHONY. If they managed to pay up their arrears . . .

ANN. No, they must go altogether. I want to put up the rent, and it's not good for my property to have it occupied by shiftless, failing people.

O'MAHONY. But Mrs. Sullivan's your friend . . . how can you ever face them if you do a thing like this . . . without . . . why . . . they'll never expect you to do such a thing . . . Willie Sullivan is Rose's greatest friend.

ANN. It won't hurt Willie, he's got his place with Hughes.

O'MAHONY. Oh, you're a rich woman, Ann; you can afford to be a little generous.

ANN. I'm not rich. I can't afford it.

O'MAHONY (*in a lower voice*). Sullivan was one of James's greatest friends, Ann. Have you forgotten that?

ANN (*stomily*). I don't see that that makes any difference.

O'Mahony sighs. *There is a pause during which they put away the papers.*

ANN. Oh, I made my will to-day, Peter.

O'MAHONY. A fresh one?

ANN. Hm . . . nothing very different from the old one except that when I die the business is to be sold at once, and the purchase-money shared up. I've made you sole executor of Rose's share.

O'MAHONY. Why, Ann?

ANN. Well, I can't run any risk about Rose's future. Of course Bob and Harry might get a good manager for the shop—but then they mightn't, they might try to run it themselves—they'd be bankrupt in five years. It's better to sell it out at once. You won't find it hard to get a good price for it.

O'MAHONY. Yes, I see. And Rose's money is to be invested?

ANN. Yes . . . (*her voice gets softer, more anxious*). You . . . you'll be very careful, won't you, Peter? Get

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something very safe . . . never mind if the interest's small . . . it's got to be safe. We can't take any risks about Rose.

O'MAHONY. Don't you worry about Rose, Ann, she'll be all right.

ANN. I'm sure she will. You've been very good to me, Peter, I don't know what I'd have done without you all these years.

O'MAHONY. Oh, nonsense. You've had your brothers . . .

ANN. Ph, they're no good.

O'MAHONY. Where is Rose to-night? In bed?

ANN. No. She took a fancy to go to that Irish concert at the last minute, and I hadn't the heart to stop her. Mrs. Sullivan took her.

O'MAHONY. Had she a good day?

ANN. Yes, very.

O'MAHONY. I really think she's getting stronger and stronger.

ANN. Oh, there's no doubt of it. Doctor French is very pleased with her. But she'll always need great care and attention of course.

O'MAHONY. Yes . . . (*taking a small bust off the chimney-piece*). Where did this come from?

ANN. Oh, that's Rose's. Willie Sullivan gave it to her the other day.

O'MAHONY. It's Emmet, isn't it?

ANN. Yee.

O'MAHONY. Willie's at the concert with them, I suppose?

ANN. Oh, no. This is the Committee night of the League.

O'MAHONY. You don't say that Willie's on the Committee? Sure, he's only a boy.

ANN. Yes, but he's very enthusiastic, I believe.

O'MAHONY. Oh, nonsense. I wish he'd keep clear of that political set. He's got the makings in him of a good business man, but that silly League would ruin him.

ANN. I quite agree with you.

O'MAHONY. That's what ruined his father. We must save Willie from it.

ANN. I hear people passing in the street. I expect the concert is over.

O'MAHONY (*going to the window*). Yes, it must be. I see a lot of people passing, and there's Rose and Mrs. Sullivan.

Ann pulls out a comfortable chair to the fire, and pours some milk into a saucepan and makes other preparations. Mrs. Sullivan and Rose come in. Mrs. Sullivan is middle-aged, with the anxious, helpless expression of a woman whose business is on the edge of bankruptcy, and whose husband is a drunkard. It is not in her character to do more than pray "God help me." Rose is eighteen, petulant, enthusiastic, a torch longing for the match, a sick child—all in one because a cripple.

ROSE. Why, Peter, are you here? (*She kisses him affectionately.*)

O'MAHONY. Well, Rose. Good evening, Mrs. Sullivan.

MRS. SULLIVAN. Good evening, Mr. O'Mahony.

ANN. Come and sit by the fire, Rose; you must be cold.

ROSE. No I'm not. (*She sits by the fire and Ann takes off her coat and shoes.*)

MRS. SULLIVAN. I won't wait, I only wanted to see Rose safely in. Good-night.

ANN. Thank you for looking after her, Susan; good-night.

MRS. SULLIVAN. Good-night, Rose.

ROSE. Good-night, Mrs. Sullivan, and tell Willie that I managed to get that book about the Fenians from a second-hand shop in Dublin—he'll know the book I mean—and I'll give it to him if he comes round to-morrow night.

MRS. SULLIVAN. I'll tell him. Good-night. (*Goes out.*)

ROSE. Where's everybody?

ANN. Your uncles haven't come in yet.

ROSE. Oh, I remember uncle Bob said they had all the winter lectures to settle, and that always means a lot of work. I do hope they'll have some one new this session.

O'MAHONY. You know they won't. They always have the same old lot set.

ROSE. Well, I like the League all the same. I'm going to make you come this winter, Peter.

O'MAHONY. No, you won't get me to go. That sort of talk, talk, talk, doesn't interest me. I've got to look after my baking.

ROSE. Perhaps it won't always be a place for talk. Willie would do something if he got the chance.

O'MAHONY. Yes, but he won't get the chance, and a good thing for him that he won't. That sort of thing is all very well as a sort of—well as a sort of amusement . . . but to go in for it seriously .

ROSE. Why not ?

O'MAHONY. You don't understand.

ANN. Now, Rose, your milk is ready.

O'MAHONY. That's it. Drink up your milk and don't bother your head about politics and Leagues. Good-night, dear. Good-night, Mrs. Nugent. (*Goes out.*)

ANN (*holding a cup of milk*). Here, dear.

ROSE. (*petulantly*). I don't want it, take it away.

ANN. Oh, come, you must drink it—just to please me—

ROSE. No, mother.

ANN. A tiny sip . . . that's it. (*She feeds her like a little child.*)

ROSE. I wish Peter wouldn't talk like that about the League.

ANN. Never mind Peter, he was only joking you. Tell me about the concert.

ROSE. There's nothing to tell.

ANN. You're tired, aren't you ?

ROSE. Yes. No.

ANN. Is your back bad ?

ROSE. No, only a little.

ANN. I'll put this cushion behind you . . . There, is that better ?

ROSE. Yes.

ANN. And I'll move the lamp so that the light won't catch your eyes . . . Now, finish this and then I'll put you to bed.

ROSE. I don't want to go to bed yet. I want to wait until Uncle Bob comes in.

ANN. He may not be in for a long time.

ROSE. Oh, yes he will ; it's half-past ten.

ANN. What do you want to see him for ?

ROSE. I want to hear all about the meeting.

ANN. You could hear it in the morning.

ROSE. No, mother, no. I want to hear it now. I'm not tired. I'm not really.

ANN. You're looking so white, darling.

ROSE. I'm all right, I am really, do, do let me stay up.

ANN. Very well, dear, just for ten minutes, but if they're not in by that time, off you go. We don't want to have Doctor French shouting at us, do we ?

ROSE. I hate Doctor French.

ANN. I'm just going down to the shop to look for a receipted bill of Bolton's. I know it must be somewhere. Would you drink a little more milk if I heated it ?

ROSE. No, mother, I couldn't, I couldn't.

ANN. Very well, dear. (*At the door.*) I hear your uncle's latchkey. Put on the saucepan of hot water.

She goes out. A moment later Bob comes in. He is a small stout man, always very busy about nothing.

BOB. Well, Rose.

ROSE. There you are at last !

BOB. Where's your mother ?

ROSE. Downstairs looking for something. Where's Uncle Harry ?

BOB. Oh, coming. Macnamara called after him in the street and I came on. Knew you'd wonder what was keeping us, and I couldn't risk catching cold

ROSE. Isn't it a beautiful night out ?

BOB. Hm. . . . I'd say there was a touch of frost. I must start using my winter muffler. I'm sure I caught a chill coming out of the hot room.

ROSE. Sit here near the fire. How did the committee go ?

BOB. Oh, very well, very well. Starkie wasn't there, I'm glad to say.

ROSE. So I suppose you got through a lot of business.

BOB. Well we settled the winter lectures at any rate—up to Christmas that is—and that's no joke I can tell you.

ROSE. No indeed. Who are you getting ? Do show me the list.

BOB. It will be published in the "Watchword." Where's my cocoa ? Don't wait for Harry of course.

ROSE. Your cocoa isn't ready yet. Do read me the list now.

BOB (*importantly*). Well, you know, Rose, it's not quite regular.

ROSE. Oh, rubbish. What's the good of you being secretary to the League if I don't hear everything before everyone else ?

BOB. Well, here it is. Shall I read it to you ?

ROSE. Yes, please.

BOB. October 4th. Hugh Tanner. "Through the Appenines with a Camera." October 18th. J. H. Lockley, "The Folk Songs of Ireland" (that's the new doctor at the Asylum—clever young chap—nice tenor voice). October 31st, Rev. Patrick Coakley, C.C., "Ireland under Elizabeth."

ROSE. You had something about Elizabeth and Ireland last session, hadn't you ?

BOB. Yes, yes. But it's an interesting period, very interesting. November 14th, your uncle Harry on "Old Dublin Newspapers." November 28th, William Sullivan, "Two Irish Patriots."

ROSE. Yes, Willie told me about that.

BOB. December 12th, Edgar Stockton, "The Nationali-

sation of Irish Railways." That's the list up to Christmas. What do you think of it?

ROSE. I think it's very good. It's so varied.

BOB. Yes, yes . . . Er—you've read Willie's essay, have you, Rose?

ROSE. He read me a rough draft of it some time ago.

BOB. Yes. . . . Now, would you mind telling me is it very extreme?

ROSE. Extreme? Well, Willie couldn't write about Stephens and Emmet without enthusiasm.

BOB. Of course no one admires Stephens and Emmet more than I do, but—but times have changed, and I sometimes think Willie doesn't realise it. We've some very respectable young men in the League now—new members—and I don't want to hurt their feelings. There's the two Casey boys, their father is Clerk of the Petty Sessions, and Smith, the Postmaster's son—you know—you know their fathers mightn't like it—to say nothing of Doctor Lockley, a most superior young man.

ROSE. Well, I know Willie feels that father started the League to revive the national spirit in Ireland, and he thinks it can be done better by thinking of Stephens than a trip to the Appenines.

BOB. But sure, Tanner never saw Stephens and he did go through the Appenines last summer.

ROSE. Willie's terribly in earnest about things.

BOB. He goes too far, Rose, he does indeed. It's very bad for him professionally. Hughes won't keep him if he goes on like this; I expect Hughes will give him a rise soon, I know he thinks well of him, he told me so. But the other day I heard some one speak of Willie as "that wild young revolutionary clerk of Mr. Hughes." Now, you know, Hughes won't like it if he hears that.

ROSE. How proud Willie would be if he heard himself called that. Anyway, I don't see that one's political views need affect one's business.

BOB. They needn't—if you're sensible. Look at us. We're—we're a desperate family. Every one knows that

Ann's husband is in prison for life for murder—political murder. Every one knows what Ann's own views were . . . every one knows what I was twenty years ago before my wretched health broke down—why, we're a desperate family, but we keep our views to ourselves, and the consequence is we draw our custom from every class in the community. The shop's thriving. Willie will have to learn to hold his tongue if he wants to get on.

ROSE. Willie would rather earn a pound a week till the Day of Judgment than hold his tongue about his views.

BOB. Ah, well, he'll grow out of it, he'll grow out of it. I thought the same when I was his age . . . I was a desperate fellow. I remember one night I swore six soldiers into the League—six—Rose.

ROSE (*wide-eyed*). Did you really? How splendid of you, Uncle Bob.

BOB. Ah, yes. I'd have had the country in a flame only for my wretched health. But I done what I could, I done what I could. It's no joke being Secretary to the League, I can tell you. Why, getting up these winter lectures is a big job in itself, and then there are always resolutions to be framed and addresses and—and people like Starkie to pacify—oh, it's very wearing. I sometimes think that if I had withdrawn from it altogether I might have got back my health. But I'll never withdraw. I've given my life willingly—for Ireland . . . Isn't that cocoa ready?

ROSE. Just. Aren't you going to lecture at all this session?

BOB. No, not at present. I might after Christmas if I could find an interesting subject.

ROSE. Why not have a lecture on father?

BOB. Your father? Why we've often had lectures about him, his life, his trial, his sentence—they all know the story.

ROSE. I was looking at the old lists yesterday. There's been nothing about him for three years.

BOB. As long as that? Are you sure?

ROSE. Yes. And I think it's a shame that the founder of the League who's in prison to-day for his patriotism should be forgotten like that.

BOB. Oh, come, come, Rose, he's not forgotten.

ROSE. He will be very soon . . . He's been in for eighteen years, he'll be released soon perhaps—have you forgotten that? You don't want him to find himself forgotten when he comes out.

BOB. No, of course. But how can I lecture on him? I can't find anything fresh to say.

ROSE. Why don't you go and see him?

BOB. In prison? No, Rose, I couldn't do that. Nothing would make James suffer more than for me to see him in the day of his humiliation. I've never seen him since he was taken from the dock. You may think that heartless of me, but it would make him and me suffer too much.

ROSE. I hoped you'd go, because I meant to have gone with you.

BOB. You, Rose?

ROSE. Yes.

BOB. But your mother wouldn't let you. She'd never let you go to the prison. She's always gone alone.

ROSE. I know, I know. It's cruel, that's what it is; it's unfair to father and me.

BOB. Hush, Rose, you mustn't say that about your mother.

ROSE (*stormily*). It is unfair. She never speaks of him to me. If I speak of him she—she—

BOB. Hush, hush, Rose. You don't understand these things, you're only a child. You must make allowances for your mother, she's never been the same since that long illness she had when you were born—just the time James was condemned to death. I've never quite understood her since.

ROSE. She—she loved father, didn't she?

BOB. Loved him? I should just think so.

ROSE. And she never speaks of him . . . I suppose

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to have the person you love most in the world shut up like that is perfectly unspeakable.

BOB. Yes, yes, and I think your mother was right. There's no use fretting over what can't be helped . . . I'll have another biscuit . . . your mother's a wonderful woman, Rose, a great manager . . .

Harry enters. He is very like his brother, as busy and as useless.

HARRY. Bob, Bob!

BOB. What is it, man, what is it?

HARRY. Is Ann there? Where's Ann? I've great news.

ROSE. What is it, Uncle Harry?

HARRY. James is released, at least he's going to be.

BOB. My God!

ROSE. What!

HARRY. It was Macnamara—that's what Macnamara wanted me for—it was on a Dublin evening paper.

BOB. But is it true, Harry?

HARRY. Don't I tell you it's on the paper. Listen. (*Opens paper.*) I'm so excited I can't find the place. Here it is. "We learn on the best authority that James Nugent, the famous revolutionary, is about to be released from prison. He was condemned to death in 1893 for the murder of Henry Foley, one of his confederates, but his sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. He is a native of Coolmore, where his wife and child are still living." There now.

ROSE. It must be true.

BOB. It must then . . .

HARRY. But, Bob, I thought he wouldn't be out for another couple of years.

BOB. It's maybe the new Chief Secretary that's done it.

HARRY. Oh, maybe you're right.

ROSE. Will he come here, Uncle Harry?

HARRY. I suppose he will.

BOB. Where else would he go to?

ROSE. Oh, isn't this splendid! We must call mother.

BOB. Who's to tell Ann ?

HARRY. You'd better do it, Bob.

BOB. No, no, let Rose, let Rose.

ROSE. I wonder how she'll take it.

BOB. You'll have to break it to her gently, you know. Sort of hint at it at first and then—oh, my God, here she is.

Ann comes in.

ANN. I've got it, Rose.

ROSE. What, mother ?

ANN. The bill. Bolton's receipted bill. I knew I had paid it. That's the second time Boltons have done a thing like that. Have you had your supper yet, Bob ? Don't forget that to-morrow's fair day, and we must have the shutters down by half-past seven, so you'd better go to bed as soon as you can. What's the matter with you ?

HARRY. Ann—— (*stops*).

ANN. Well ?

HARRY. It's—— something's happened, Ann.

ANN. Happened ? What's happened ? . . . What is it, Harry ? There's nothing wrong in the shop, I know—unless—is Clarke bankrupt ?

HARRY. No, it's not that, Ann.

BOB. Now, Ann, calm yourself.

ANN. Oh, tell me what it is, I'm not a child ; I can bear things.

HARRY. Well—— (*stops*).

ROSE. Father is coming, mother.

ANN. What ?

ROSE. He's going to be released at once.

ANN. James . . . coming . . . back . . . Harry, is this true ?

HARRY. Yes, Ann ; at least I think so.

Ann sits down.

BOB. Quick, Harry, get her a glass of water.

ANN. No, no, I'm not going to faint. Who told you ?

HARRY. It's on the evening paper.

ANN. Show me. (*He hands her the paper, she reads it*

and hands it back). Thank you. (*Her voice is quite expressionless.*)

BOB. It's extraordinary to think after eighteen years . . . well, well . . .

HARRY. He'll be greatly changed.

BOB. Bound to be after all those years; his health ruined, I suppose, with jail fever and the like . . .

HARRY. And his spirit broken too. Man, but he had the great spirit long ago. Do you remember, Bob, that day in Kilkenny? I came on the account of it the other day in an old "Freeman"—no, but an "Independent" it was—— Where are you going, Ann?

ANN (*at the door*). I'm going to write to the Governor to find out if it's true.

BOB. Did—did they say nothing about this, Ann, when you were there last?

ANN. No.

BOB. You haven't been since April, have you?

ANN. No. (*Goes out.*)

ROSE (*almost crying*). Uncle Bob, what does she mean? Why doesn't she say something? Is she disappointed he's coming back, or what?

BOB. Oh, no, Rose.

HARRY. Never think that, Rose; never think that about your mother. She worshipped your father—she gave him all her money, she went with him everywhere, she left me and Bob to manage the shop as best we could. Why, I've newspapers upstairs full of accounts of the speeches James made and the speeches she made and the way they went about together—oh, it's very interesting reading.

BOB. I think it's most satisfactory—most satisfactory—your mother has taken it splendidly. You know it might have given her a great shock—I felt quite faint myself for a minute——. Hello, there's a ring.

HARRY. You'd better open the door, Bob.

BOB. Oh, damn. Who on earth can it be at this hour?
(*Goes out.*)

ROSE. It's—it's all so wonderful. Somehow I never expected he'd come back—I don't know why. It's wonderful to think I'll see him.

HARRY. Ah, you'll never have seen the real James Nugent, Rose. You'll only see an old broken man creeping home to die.

ROSE. Poor, poor father . . . Why—that sounds like Willie's voice—it is Willie.

Bob and Willie Sullivan come in. Willie is nineteen and very young.

WILLIE. I had to come in and see you all. Isn't this tremendous. Think of James Nugent coming back. He's just what we want—a real fearless honest man. My God, he'll save Ireland.

HARRY. I'm afraid—as I was just saying to Rose—poor James won't have much spirit left after all those years in prison.

BOB. His health, you know, will be quite broken down.

WILLIE (*blankly*). But—do you mean—you think he'll be too broken to do anything in public?

HARRY. Well, eighteen years in prison, you know—

WILLIE. I never thought of that . . . But after he's had a bit of a rest—he's not more than forty-five, is he?

BOB. Well, well, I dunno. Anyway I'm glad the League is still going at Coolmore. It's the only one of the twelve branches he started that is still in existence. We've kept the flag flying in great style. I'm wondering what sort of a demonstration we ought to have for James.

HARRY. Oh, I hadn't thought of that.

BOB. It's so awkward now about our fight with the Town Band—we won't be able to get it now—of course we might try illuminations.

WILLIE. I think the best thing would be a monster meeting at which he could make a speech.

BOB. Well, I was thinking of that, but then he may not want to make a speech.

HARRY. No, no, I think we'd better not do anything rash. Let's wait and see what his views are, and anyhow

we ought to wait till the Canon comes back from Palestine.

BOB. Stockton will probably——

HARRY. Oh, I forget, Stockton told me to tell you he can't lecture after all.

BOB. Can't lecture? But he promised.

HARRY. Yes, but he didn't know then that Tanner was going to lecture. He says he won't let his name appear in the same series as Tanner—you know they've never patched up that row over the building contract.

BOB. Well, that's just like Stockton—he promises you a thing and then when your back is turned he——and my list all made out and ready for the "Watch-word"—who am I to get now?

WILLIE. Oh, Stockton's no loss, he's an old woman.

BOB. He is a loss. The Nationalisation of the Railways is a most important question, and one which the League has not yet passed an opinion on. I know there are many important men waiting to hear what we'll say on the subject, and Stockton has got relations on two of the railways in Ireland, so he's in a position to speak with intimate knowledge. Who am I to get now?

WILLIE. Maybe if you ask Father Kearney he might speak?

BOB. No, he wouldn't. I know he wouldn't. He's another. It's most disheartening really. There he was in the thick of things with James and he won't open his mouth. He sends in his subscription all right—I wish others were as regular—but as to doing anything practical—helping in a commemoration or—or—decorating a grave, he's useless. I'll resign the Secretaryship, I declare I will; this sort of thing is killing me.

ROSE. Perhaps father would give a lecture.

WILLIE. Yes.

BOB. Your father? The very thing. Why, he'll have any amount to tell us, all about the prison and how he was treated—most interesting—most interesting—it'll be the best lecture of the lot. By the way, Rose,

this knocks out the idea for my lecture—it's a pity, but no matter—of course James will speak. (*Ann comes in.*) Oh, Ann, we're going to get James to give us a lecture. Stockton has played me false.

WILLIE. That'll be splendid.

HARRY. It should be very interesting.

BOB. I'll have to put off advertising the list until next week's "Watchword." I must wait and get the title from him. "Behind Lock and Key" would sound good now, or "Prison Bars," or—oh, Ann, what sort of a demonstration should we have for him?

ANN. Demonstration?

BOB. Yes, when he comes back.

HARRY. We can't get a band—unless we get one from Dublin.

BOB. Too expensive, too expensive.

WILLIE (*a little doubtfully*). I hope Mr. Nugent will like the list of lectures. I'm sure he'll think we should have had more national subjects.

BOB. Oh, he can't find any fault with them, they're so varied. I know Tanner's on the Appenines will be most interesting—and your one, Harry, on Dublin Newspapers.

HARRY. Yes, it will be good. If I can only get that "Freeman" for May 30th, 1886.

Ann laughs.

ROSE. What is it, mother?

Ann still laughs.

BOB. What are you laughing at, Ann?

ANN. It will be very funny—when James comes back—and asks you what you've been doing—for eighteen years—and you tell him about the League, and show him the list of lectures——

BOB. What's wrong with the list?

HARRY. Well, we've done a lot.

BOB. The membership is larger than it's been for years.

HARRY. We're the only branch that's still in existence.

Patriots

WILLIE. I don't suppose he'd approve of our supporting the United Irish League candidates.

HARRY. He'll have to realise that things have changed.

BOB. We done what we could.

HARRY. We stood out for compulsory Irish.

BOB. You attended classes yourself for two winters.

HARRY. Yes, indeed, I know a lot of Irish—not—not to speak it of course.

WILLIE. Still I can realise James Nugent wanting something more than that.

HARRY. We passed a resolution against the Irish Council's Bill.

BOB. We done what we could.

HARRY. And things have changed.

BOB. Yes, things have changed.

WILLIE. I suppose they have.

But they look at each other uncomfortably and in silence.

Ann laughs again.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE—*The same. A week later. Rose is alone. Willie comes in.*

WILLIE. Mr. Hughes sent me across with this letter for your mother.

ROSE. What's happened to Johnny?

WILLIE. Oh, Johnny's all right, but I offered to run over with it. The fact is I wanted to know if he's come. Has he, Rose?

ROSE. No, not yet. The train must be late. Uncle Bob and Uncle Harry have gone to the station to meet him. They're so frightened, they've never had a minutes' happiness since the night they heard he was going to be released, and mother laughed at them.

WILLIE. I know. I feel miserable too. I don't know what he'll expect.

ROSE. Poor father. I don't suppose he'll expect very much, except care and quiet and attention. It's his heart you know, Willie; it's on account of his weak heart he's been released. The doctor wrote to mother about him.

WILLIE. It's like Christ coming to earth again twenty years after His ascension. I wonder will he realise how hard it is to do things nowadays.

ROSE. But the League has done a lot, Willie.

WILLIE. It's done nothing. Nothing that he'd call anything. That's what makes his coming back so frightful.

ROSE. At any rate he won't blame you. He can't. You're one of the youngest members.

WILLIE. Do you know what, Rose, I've made up my

Patriots

mind. I'll chuck my place if necessary. I mean if he wants people to go with him and help him, I won't hesitate. I'll leave Hughes

ROSE. What would your people say? Oh, Willie!

WILLIE. Oh, they'll be all right. They've got the shop.

ROSE. And then there's your own career, Oh, Willie, I don't like you're doing such a desperate thing.

WILLIE. Do you think my career matters a hang compared with—with—

ROSE. Of course we've always said that it doesn't. But when it comes to the point . . . However, I'm sure father won't want you to do anything of the kind.

WILLIE. No, he may not. Has your mother gone to the station?

ROSE. No, I think she's in her room changing her dress.

WILLIE. You're all dressed up.

ROSE. Of course.

WILLIE. How does she—I mean what does she think of it?

ROSE. I don't know. I never know what mother thinks. She's hardly spoken about him, she got his room ready and everything, but—oh I don't know. She handed us the doctor's letter, but I don't know whether she doesn't care or whether she cares very much. Yesterday I was looking over a bundle of old papers of Uncle Harry's and I came on a long article all about her, her personality and her influence. It was dated about a year before father's trial. They spoke of her "magnetic personality," her "queenly bearing" and now she's—she's—she's not a bit like that, Willie.

WILLIE. Yes, she must have changed alot. But she's a splendid woman all the same. I wish we had her brains down at our place and maybe the shop would begin to look up.

ROSE. Are things very bad?

WILLIE. Ay . . . He's drinking again.

ROSE. Oh, Willie!

WILLIE. You see at any rate I've got to get away from

this town. I can't live here with a thing like that going on.

ROSE. What would your mother do without you, you're all she has?

Ann comes in.

ANN. Oh, Willie, that you?

WILLIE. Yes, I just came over with this note from Mr. Hughes. I'll be off.

ANN (*taking note*). Thank you.

Willie goes out.

ROSE (*hurrying to the window*). I see people coming from the station. They'll be here in a minute, and—oh, mother, you haven't changed.

ANN. Me? No.

ROSE. I thought you were going to.

ANN. Oh, no, why should I?

ROSE. You—you don't seem to care a bit.

ANN. Your blouse is open behind, Rose. Let me fasten it for you.

ROSE (*looking out of window*). He'll be here in a minute.

ANN. (*with sudden passion*). You'll always love me, Rose?

ROSE (*with surprise*). Mother?

ANN (*kissing her passionately*). My darling, my darling, remember he's nothing—nothing—you've been mine—mine—

ROSE. Mother, what is it? Don't cry.

(*Ann moves away abruptly. Rose turns to the window again.*) They're coming, I see them. Mother, he doesn't look old, come and look. I'm going to open the window and wave to him.

ANN. Don't, Rose. (*Rose tries to lift the sash but stops with a little cry of pain. Going to her swiftly*). What is it, Rose, have you hurt yourself?

ROSE. No, I just—it's only my back.

ANN. You shouldn't try to lift that sash, it's too heavy. Are you sure you haven't hurt yourself?

ROSE. Yes, quite sure. Where are they now?

Patriots

ANN (*looking out*). They've just turned in at the shop door. Come away from the window, dear.

ROSE. I wonder what he'll think of me . . . Has he ever seen a photograph of me, mother?

ANN. No.

ROSE. Wouldn't the prison people let you give him one?

BOB (*very fussy and nervous outside the door*). I think Ann is here—I'm sure she is—come in, James, come in. (*Looks in.*) Oh, Ann, there you are. He's come. Come in, James, Ann is here.

James comes in, followed by Harry. James Nugent's hair is nearly white, but he holds himself erect and walks and speaks with vigour.

JAMES. Ah, Ann, how are you? (*He kisses her.*)

BOB. And this is Rose, James.

JAMES. Is this Rose? Will you kiss me, my dear, I am your father.

ROSE (*crying*). I'm very glad to see you.

JAMES. We should have met long ago. Ann, why would you never bring her to see me? . . . Ah, well, perhaps you were right.

ANN. Won't you sit down?

JAMES (*not sitting*). Thanks. (*Goes to the window.*) Everything looks just the same—I might have been here only yesterday—how wonderful it is to be back again—the room seems bigger, I think—How wonderful—

ANN. Had you a nice journey?

JAMES. Yes, a delightful journey, Ann, the train passed through such beautiful country, and everything looking so prosperous and well-to-do.

BOB. Yes, the country's thriving. Business is very good just now.

JAMES. How is the shop doing?

ANN. We've done very well the last half year.

BOB. My dear James, there's been a revolution since Ann came and looked after things. You remember what it was in the old days, waste, neglect—yes, Harry, there was neglect—but that's all altered now. We're

thriving, thriving, it's the best grocery shop in the town.

JAMES. I'm very glad to hear it. It used to make me unhappy to think that perhaps you were badly off.

ANN (*drily*). Did it?

JAMES. Yes . . . Rose is a Nugent, Ann. Don't you think she's very like my father?

ANN. No, I don't see any likeness to the Nugents.

JAMES. Well, well, what matter. (*He kisses Rose very affectionately.*)

ANN. (*stung to jealousy*). See if tea is ready, Rose.

ROSE. Kate is getting it.

ANN. Please go and see about it.

ROSE. Oh, very well. (*She limps out.*)

JAMES (*watching her*). She's hurt herself, hasn't she?

ANN. She's a cripple.

JAMES. Oh, . . . I never knew, you never told me,

ANN. It was the result of an accident, I suppose?

ANN. Yes.

JAMES. Recently.

ANN. No, a good many years ago.

JAMES (*after a pause—briskly*). Well, now, I want to hear all about everything. I tried to make Ann understand a code for giving me information at our interviews in prison, but you never understood what I was aiming at, did you, Ann?

ANN. No, I didn't.

JAMES. Well, now, tell me everything.

HARRY. Well, we got several of the workhouse contracts this winter.

JAMES. Oh, I don't mean the shop; I mean the Cause

HARRY and BOB. The Cause?

JAMES. I've seen some papers of course, but they had very little information—I may say none—in them. I gathered, however, that you have been working very quietly and discreetly for some years. That is quite right. Discretion was what we wanted in the old days. The organisation is better now, I am sure.

BOB. Oh, yes, yes.

JAMES. I see they are still playing that old Parliamentary game. I thought they'd have learned its futility by this time. I'm sorry to see O'Brien in it. Really he was made for better things.

HARRY. I tell you, James, Parliament has done a great deal of late years; there's been the Land Act and——

JAMES. Oh yes, sops, sops. Parliament may have passed some good bills in its time, but it passed a devilish lot of bad ones too. And it's not the fellows at Westminster we have to thank for the good ones; it was some man in Ireland who maimed a bullock or shot a landlord that did the work. I'd like to repeal every bill for the last thirty years.

HARRY. What?

JAMES. They're only chains, Harry. The better the bill the stronger the chain. The better you house your slave, the better you feed him, the less just appears his demand for freedom, the less he wants freedom. Isn't that true?

HARRY. I dunno.

JAMES. How is the League doing?

BOB. The membership of the Coolmore Branch is larger than it's been for years.

JAMES. Splendid!

BOB. By the way, there's a small deputation from the League coming in a little while to welcome you. Only two or three, Father Kearney and a couple more.

JAMES. I'll be glad to see John Kearney again. How are we off for arms?

BOB (*quickly*). I want to show you, James, the list of lectures for the coming winter. I thought perhaps you might like to give us a lecture yourself about your experiences in prison, and how the Government treated you.

JAMES. No, I won't lecture on that. What does it matter how they treated me—I'm out, I'm free, that's what matters. But, of course, I'll speak for you. (*Reads*

list.) Ah, the police are watching you at present, I see.

HARRY. The police? No.

BOB. Why do you think that?

JAMES. Well, this list—it's so very harmless—unless—is there a double meaning in it? (*His voice drops significantly.*)

HARRY. What?

JAMES. The lecture on the Nationalisation of Irish Railways, for instance; does that by any chance point out the best way to set about getting possession of them when there's a rising?

HARRY. Oh, no, no. But we all think that if the Government was to take over the railways and——

JAMES. Well, well. The police are not active at present then?

BOB. No. Very quiet, decent men.

JAMES. I see. Effete. Good. "Old Dublin Newspapers"—what on earth is that about?

HARRY (*with pride*). That's my lecture.

JAMES. But what is there interesting in old newspapers?

HARRY. My dear James, you find everything interesting in old newspapers. I've been collecting them for over twenty years, but lately I'm making a speciality in accounts of the funerals of patriots, you've no idea what interesting comparisons can be drawn between—say—the funeral of O'Connell and Parnell, or the——

BOB. Oh, talking of funerals, James, I want to know is it a kind of a twitch in the heart you feel, or a dull pain, or do you feel anything at all?

JAMES. In my heart?

BOB. Yes. You know I've a wretchedly weak heart myself, and I want to compare my symptoms with yours.

JAMES. Oh, I won't talk about my health.

BOB. Well, I think that's selfish of you, James. Maybe I could do something for you. I have a bottle recommended to me by——

JAMES. What about arms ?

HARRY. Of course the language movement has come along since you were imprisoned.

JAMES. Oh, I don't attach much importance to that. Let's get a country and then we'll see about the language. The idea's all right in moderation, but it's apt to draw people's attention away from the main thing. Are we well armed ?

BOB (*miserably*). Ann, don't you think tea is ready ?

ANN (*cruelly*). Rose will call us when it is. James is asking you something, Bob.

BOB. Oh, is he ?

JAMES. I only wanted to know how we were off for arms. How many rifles have we ?

BOB. Well—er—well——

HARRY. You see, James, you mayn't realise it yet, but things have changed——

BOB. Yes, James, very much changed.

HARRY. We work in a different way nowadays.

BOB. We've changed.

JAMES. In what way ?

BOB. Well, one organises differently—we believe in educating the people—there's the Gaelic League, you know.

HARRY. And then I had to think of the shop and your wife and child, and Father Brady advised me and——

BOB. That's it.

JAMES (*quite bewildered*). What do you mean ? I don't understand what you're talking about.

ANN. They mean, James, that they've no arms, and don't intend to get any.

JAMES. What . . . But—the League ?

BOB. The League is flourishing.

JAMES. But—but——

BOB. Now, James, you mustn't blame me. It's been my wretched health. Two months after your conviction I got a dreadful chill, I've never been the better

of it since. I've been to every doctor in the country—that's why I never went to see you in prison—the doctor said it would be too much for me, not that there's any doctor here who can do anything for me, the only thing that does me any good is the advice I get from the "Sunday Globe's" medical column, and they always say that my symptoms are very serious and that I should see a specialist. That will make you understand my wretched health. Only for that I'd be in the forefront of the battle to-day.

JAMES. Has nothing been done ?

BOB. We done what we could, James, we done what we could. Of course your conviction was a great blow to us, and it cripples us for years, but we recovered it and went on as if nothing had happened. We've always stood for the best nationalism in the country, we supported compulsory Irish (though I don't suppose you believe in that) and—and the United Irish League and—and all the best interests of Ireland.

HARRY. And then there was the shop ; I felt it, and your wife and child were left to me as a sacred charge, and my first duty was to them. I consulted Father Brady about them, and he advised me to take no active part in politics for some years, but I've never stopped being a member of the League—never—and I've given them a lecture or a reading from the old papers every session for the last fifteen or sixteen years—you can look up the records.

JAMES (*realising at last*). I see. I've got to begin from the beginning, all over again.

BOB. Well, you mayn't believe it, but I've proved that I've only half a lung and my heart is—well—wretched.

JAMES. What a fool I was to let myself be taken, but I didn't know I was so necessary, I thought others would take my place. I thought I was only one of a hundred—a thousand—

HARRY. No, there was no one like you, James. . . .

JAMES. It can't be helped now. We won't waste time looking back, we'll look forward. D'ye know, personally, I feel glad. Of course from the national point of view it's terrible to think that all those years have been wasted, but one of the thoughts that tortured me in prison was that when I came out I wouldn't be wanted; that in the new organisation no place would be found for me. I see now I am wanted as badly—worse perhaps than I was wanted twenty years ago.

BOB (*sneezes*). I knew I had caught cold. That's from waiting at the station.

HARRY. But, James, you'll find your views considered a little out of date.

JAMES. Out of date? They were supposed to be out of date then. Mitchell was out of date, Emmet was out of date, but I tell you that until Ireland gets out of date from north to south she'll never win anything.

BOB. I'm going to take some quinine. (*He goes out.*)

JAMES. We've got to start again. It's not too late. There was a Nugent out in '98, my two uncles followed Smith O'Brien, I had a cousin mixed up in the Invincibles, and now, Bob, I have got to . . . why, where's Bob?

HARRY. I think he went out. I'll go and look for him. (*He goes out.*)

JAMES. Your brothers have changed, Ann. They were not like that long ago. Well, well, it's you and me again, Ann, you and me against the world again.

ANN. No, not me, this time.

JAMES. Ann?

ANN. I have duties. There's the shop.

JAMES. Yes, the shop, I forgot the shop . . . Do you know the shop may be one of our most useful assets. It makes a splendid head-quarters for an organisation. You remember the part Flanigan's public-house played long ago?

ANN. Yes. And the police heard all our plans next morning.

JAMES. That's where a shop like yours will have the advantage. There'll be no temptation to drink ourselves communicative. There will be only ourselves serving in the shop.

ANN. (*proudly*). I have three assistants.

JAMES. Oh . . . well they must be members of the League, of course.

ANN. Are you in earnest, James?

JAMES. About what?

ANN. Do you seriously want to begin the old thing again?

JAMES. Why, of course.

ANN. Then we must understand each other You asked me a little while ago why I never gave you any information about the League or the political situation when I went to see you in prison. You said that I didn't understand you were trying to establish a code. I'm not stupid . . . I saw what you wanted, but I wouldn't help you . . . I was sick of it all.

JAMES. What do you mean?

ANN. When you were arrested, James, when you were dragged from my room on that awful night, I fainted. I went from one fainting fit to another. It was four months before I was able to stir from my bed.

JAMES. I didn't know you had been as ill as that, Ann.

ANN. And when I got up and saw myself in the glass my hair was grey—as grey as it is now. I was an old woman, James. I was just twenty-six years old. (*She can no longer keep the passion out of her voice.*)

JAMES. Ann!

ANN. But it wasn't my face and hair only that were changed . . . while I lay there helpless for four months I wasn't able to do anything but think, and lying there I saw everything clearly at last. I saw my life here with mother before you met me—calm, sheltered, playing at patriotism as we all played in those days. Then you came and I was fascinated by you. You were so passionate and impetuous, so in earnest, so desperate, so different

to any one I had ever met, so . . . You wooed me passionately, you married me passionately, and for five years you dragged——

JAMES. Dragged!

ANN. Me after you round the country kindling my patriotism at the flame of yours, speaking through me with your passionate voice. I was never myself all those years, I was only you. You took my health, my strength, my beauty, my money, and you spent them prodigally, and at twenty-six I found myself old and ugly and grey and worn out.

JAMES. I loved you very much, Ann.

ANN (*stormily*). Perhaps you did. But you never thought of me. You never had the least consideration for me.

JAMES. How can you say such a thing?

ANN. I know it because you did me a wrong—a terrible, unforgiveable wrong.

JAMES. What was it?

ANN. I won't tell you, I'll spare you that . . . I saw all this, James, as I lay in bed. Sickness makes some people feel that nothing really matters, but I was made to feel that all these things mattered tremendously. And then by a miracle I was freed from you. For a certain number of years I would be my own mistress again. Perhaps for the rest of my life. If you had been dead I would have gone abroad, far away from Ireland and its stupid politics, but while you lived I couldn't do that. You still claimed me, I had a duty to do, I had to visit you. Well, I came here and took the shop over from my brothers. I found it a miserable little place, badly managed, on the verge of bankruptcy. It's now the best grocery shop in the town. I've built up a splendid business; I draw my custom from the Prescotts and the Canon down to the poorest working man. Eighteen years ago I was a discredited woman; people spoke of me as if I was hardly respectable, a person decent people would shun. I'm the most respected woman

in the town to-day, and now, just when I've reached this position you come and you think I'm ging back into that old life, that I'll risk my position, ruin my business perhaps for—for something I care nothing about.

JAMES. You used to be patriotic, Ann.

ANN. No. I'd have gone to the stake for Ireland if you'd told me to, and I'd have betrayed Ireland if you'd told me to—you were my patriotism. I suppose I can't stop you going back to that nonsense if you want to, but you go alone without me or my money or my influence.

JAMES. You're shrinking from it, of course. I can understand that. Ann, I don't understand all you've been saying, I don't think it's true, but perhaps there's some truth in it. Forgive me if I treated you badly, I didn't mean to, and don't let a wrong I did you twenty years ago stand in your way now; don't let it stand in Ireland's way. Think of it, Ann. Think of all those long weary years, the injustices that have been heaped upon us, the way we've been plundered of money, starved with famine, drained of our best blood, the crucified of the nations. And think of it with the English driven out, a free country, a happy people, liberty at last. Think of it, Ann, Ann! *(It is the old enthusiasm, the old eloquence that swayed a country-side twenty years ago.)*

ANN. It's no use. You can't kindle me again. *(Bitterly.)* I suppose I'm too old.

JAMES. Oh, well, never mind. I can do without you if it comes to that.

ANN. You'll find it's no use, James. People will simply laugh at your kind of talk nowadays. They'll think you're mad. And I begin to think you are.

JAMES. I'm not mad. But this means everything to me. I've shot a man for the sake of it; I've given the best years of my life for it; won't you help me, Ann, if not for the sake of Ireland, for the sake of the love we had—we have for each other, *(He catches her arm.)*

ANN. Don't, James. Let me go. That love died

eighteen years ago. I think . . . I think I hate you now.

JAMES. Ann !

O'Mahony, Bob, Harry, Sullivan, Father Kearney and Willie come in, and Ann goes out.

BOB. This, James, is the little deputation come from the League to welcome you.

FATHER KEARNEY (*stout, middle-aged, and good tempered*). Not formally, James. We just came round to shake hands and bid you welcome home.

JAMES. I'm glad to see you again, John, glad to see you again. Peter, is that you ?

O'MAHONY. Welcome back, James ; you're looking well.

SULLIVAN (*a little drunk*). You haven't forgotten me, have you ?

JAMES. You are . . .

SULLIVAN. Dan Sullivan.

JAMES. Of course. But you've changed.

SULLIVAN. Well, I'm older to be sure, and this is my son Willie, one of the old stock.

BOB. And a most enthusiastic member of the League.

JAMES. How are you ?

WILLIE. I'm proud to meet you, sir.

FATHER KEARNEY. Well, now, we want to mark your return by some sort of a little festival, James, and we're wondering what you'd like. Some thought of a public meeting, but I think we've all decided now on a nice quiet dinner at Fitzzy's some day next week—just old friends there. How would that suit you ?

SULLIVAN. Yes, yes, a nice little dinner at Fitzzy's.

JAMES. I . . . I don't know, thank you very much. . . . Things are not exactly what I thought they were, and I've got to get to work at once.

O'MAHONY. Now, James, Bob has been telling me something of your notions and the things you've been saying since you came home, and you've got to understand from the beginning that that sort of thing won't do. You're a bit behind the times—naturally—but

you can take it from me that that sort of talk is no use nowadays; it never was much use, but it's absolutely ridiculous now.

JAMES. I understand that there is no physical force party in Ireland at present. That is not to be wondered at when there are men like you at the head of the League.

O'MAHONY (*coolly*). Oh, I left the League fifteen years ago.

JAMES. Left it?

O'MAHONY. I hadn't time for that sort of nonsense.

JAMES. I'm going to start a new movement.

FATHER KEARNEY (*with a fat smile*). Oh, come, come, James, absurd.

JAMES (*desperately*). I'm going to save Ireland.

FATHER KEARNEY. Don't you bother about Ireland. She's getting along all right.

JAMES. She can't be right until she's free.

FATHER KEARNEY. What can you do anyway?

JAMES. I can do what I did twenty years ago—rouse the people, go through the country, build a new League on the ruins of the old.

BOB (*miserably*). You'll only ruin the League, James, if you do that. That sort of advanced thing won't go down with a lot of the new members, I know it won't. Couldn't you keep quiet anyway till after Christmas, when the subscriptions are paid?

HARRY. I don't know what the Canon will say, and he's on his way home.

FATHER KEARNEY. Give it up, James. It was very good fun twenty years ago when we were all young and felt that life was a desperately serious thing, and that Ireland would sink under the sea if we didn't cut her free from England. But we're older now, and more sensible, and we feel that things are gradually working right.

SULLIVAN. Yes, you were pretty hot-headed, John. Do you remember the time you went about addressing meetings of the farmers and the Bishop's messenger

following you all the time with a letter forbidding you to speak—and the way you dodged him ?

FATHER KEARNEY (*hastily*). Yes, yes, yes. But I stopped the minute I got the letter.

SULLIVAN (*to O'Mahony*). And the rifles you used to get, and they supposed to be crockery. Well, well, I love thinking of them old times. Come over to Fitzzy's, James, and we'll have a drink.

JAMES. No, no. Oh, the waste of time, of opportunity. There was such a chance after Parnell's death for a physical force movement—it was the only thing that would have quickly put heart into the people. Then nine years of hard, quiet, effective work, and in 1900 the South African War, Ireland empty of troops, the best chance for a successful rising for a hundred and fifty years.

FATHER KEARNEY. I'm sorry, James. . . .

JAMES. Oh, I don't blame you. I suppose there was no other leader, but if I had been out, Davitt, O'Brien and myself, we'd have done something ; why did I let myself be taken . . .

BOB. Yes, 'twas a pity.

JAMES. But I had to kill Foley ; he had all the names, all the secret papers—I found he was making terms to betray us. I couldn't risk another Carey . . . and I wouldn't order another man to do what I might be thought afraid to do myself.

FATHER KEARNEY. Well, you're going to spend the rest of your life quietly here, James. Mrs. Nugent will make you very comfortable, and to-night you're coming up to have dinner with me, and over the fire and a glass of whiskey we'll talk of old times.

O'MAHONY. All your troubles are over now, James.

SULLIVAN. We'll have a nice happy evening, and James will tell us that story of his fight with Baker and the two policemen ; won't you, James ?

JAMES. Good God, you seem to think my life is an anecdote—a thing to be told stories about. John,

I've been dead for eighteen years. I've come back from the grave, I'm free again, the doctor says I've only a few years to live. I've got to work desperately. I've dreamed of these years all the time I've been in prison. I was a passionate man when I went in, but I curbed my passion in there. I saw it was only by being very quiet and patient that I could ever hope to get out . . . and I was quiet and patient for eighteen years, and now that I am out and free you ask me to sit over the fire and exchange stories with you . . . John, you've forgotten me. (*Father Kearney shrugs his shoulders and turns away*). I see you won't help me. Are you all against me ?

WILLIE. I'm with you, sir.

JAMES. Good man. O'Mahony ?

O'MAHONY. No.

JAMES. Dan ?

SULLIVAN. Well, I'm . . . I'm not exactly against you, James . . .

JAMES. Will you help me ?

SULLIVAN. What d'ye mean by helping you ?

JAMES. Just what I meant long ago. The soft way isn't the way to save Ireland, it's got to be the hard way ; it's got to be the fighting way—with rifle and sword.

SULLIVAN (*hastily*). Oh, no, no, James. I couldn't do that.

JAMES. Ph, I thought not. Bob, you're the Secretary of the League still, aren't you ? (*Bob nods*.) The meetings are on Tuesdays ? Very well. Call a specially important one for next Tuesday. I am going to speak.

BOB. But Tanner was going to speak next week.

JAMES. I don't care a damn about Tanner. Do what I tell you.

BOB. Well, it's upsetting all the list . . . oh, very well.

Rose comes in.

ROSE. Come in to tea, father.

JAMES. Yes, Rose. Come, Willie, come in to tea with us. Good-afternoon, gentlemen. I thought that at least in Coolmore—in my native town—I would be safe from traitors and cowards. I see I was mistaken.

James, Rose and Willie go out.

HARRY. Well, well.

SULLIVAN (*snivelling*). He needn't have called us cowards. I'm as brave as any man, but when a fellow comes to my time of life he's not fit for . . . for . . . swords and rifles and . . . and . . . oh, I'm going over to Fitzy's.

BOB. And we all thought he'd be changed. Why he's just the same—only worse.

O'MAHONY (*slowly*). He's mad of course. But he makes us all feel a bit ashamed, doesn't he? Ashamed of the things we didn't do.

FATHER KEARNEY. Poor James, poor James. God help him.

CURTAIN

ACT III.

A Week later.

SCENE—*The room where the League meetings are held. A platform and rows of empty benches. Evening. Willie Sullivan and Jim Powell (the caretaker of the hall) are alone in the room.*

WILLIE. I don't believe there's going to be a soul.

JIM. Ah, sure, there might yet, Master Willie. It's not much after half-past seven.

WILLIE. It's a quarter to eight—after it. Isn't it dreadful, Jim?

JIM. Well, it's a very wet night, you know, and then there's the Mission at the Chapel and them Moving Pictures at the Town Hall.

WILLIE. This will break his heart.

JIM. I'm going to see them to-morrow night; they say they're a wonder entirely. Dan Clancy was saying there's one there of a fight between a nigger and an Irishman—oh, the nicest thing you ever saw. I'd have gone to-night, but of course with this League meeting I couldn't. What'll Mr. Nugent be doing? Will he be stopping at Coolmore, d'ye know?

WILLIE. I don't know. This meeting was to decide everything.

JIM. Well now, he'll be a foolish man if he leaves Coolmore, I tell you. The wife has a very tidy business up at the Square. Indeed I remember the Nugents before James came along, a queer cracked set they were, always having trouble about land, or poaching, or politics,

or divilment of some sort ; oh, believe me, they'll always be on for making trouble, them Nugents.

WILLIE. How do you feel about it, Jim ?

JIM. Well, of course I don't want to say anything against Mr. Bob, or any of his relations. He's been hiring this hall for meetings for the last twenty years, so I must have a respect for him, but I don't think it matters one way or the other. You see, Master Willie, this is the hall where nearly all the meetings of the town are held. When the Parochial Hall was burned even the Archdeacon had his prayer meetings here—yes, indeed ! And a beautiful soft speaker he is—and so, you see, I hear every side speaking, and you can't expect me to be very much for anything—and the longer I live the harder I find it to make out what difference Home Rule is going to make. If James Nugent wants to go about having meetings and rousing the people, as he calls it, I don't see why he shouldn't—'tis a free country—only, mind me, Mr. Willie, to have been in prison isn't as respectable as it used to be—no indeed—and that's why there's a lot of people kept away to-night . . . Here's this letter came a while ago for Mr. Nugent. What'll I do with it ?

WILLIE. Leave it here on the table, I'll give it to him . . . Ah, here's some one at last. (*Goes down the hall.*) Why, Rose !

ROSE. There you are, Willie. Oh, isn't it wet . . . I thought the meeting was to be here. Where is it going to be ?

WILLIE. It is here.

ROSE. But—but—there's nobody here . . . it's at eight, isn't it ?

WILLIE. Yes.

ROSE. Don't you think any one's coming ? Oh, Willie !

JIM. You see, miss, there's them Moving Pictures and the Mission.

WILLIE. It doesn't look as if we'd have many, Rose.

ROSE. There'll be nobody at all. I know it. And it will kill father.

WILLIE. Oh, no, Rose.

ROSE. Yes, it'll kill him, it'll kill him. It will be just the last straw.

WILLIE. Perhaps I could go out and bring some people in. When was he to leave your house, do you know?

ROSE. He left it long ago. He went over to O'Mahony's, they are coming down together. I came on by myself because mother was so slow about getting ready.

WILLIE. Well, O'Mahony will be here and Father Kearney, I know, and your two uncles, and your mother. If I could only get ten or twelve more it wouldn't be so bad.

ROSE. No, it's no use, Willie. He expects a packed hall, great enthusiasm and crowds—oh, it's all too dreadful— (*She begins to cry.*)

WILLIE. Don't cry, Rose, it's not your fault. Ah, here are some people coming now.

Two young men come in.

1ST MAN (*to* 2ND MAN). I don't think this is the place.

2ND MAN. Searles said it was round the corner.

1ST MAN (*to* WILLIE). I beg your pardon, but is this where the Moving Pictures are?

WILLIE. No.

1ST MAN. I thought not. Where are they, d'ye know?

WILLIE. Round the corner on the right.

1ST MAN. Thank you. (*Going.*)

JIM. They're at the Town Hall, and I hear they're grand.

1ST MAN. So I hear.

WILLIE. Wait a minute. Do you know a most interesting meeting will be held here to-night, when a speech will be made by James Nugent, the famous revolutionary.

2ND MAN. The what?

Patriots

WILLIE. The rebel. The man who was shut up for eighteen years by the English Government for attempting to free the country.

1ST MAN. What did you say his name was ?

WILLIE. Nugent. James Nugent.

1ST MAN. Never heard of him.

JIM. Sure, don't you know Mrs. Nugent's shop down the Square—opposite Fitzzy's ?

1ST MAN. Is it the grocery shop ?

JIM. Yes, that's the one. Sure she's his wife.

WILLIE. It's going to be a splendid speech. You shouldn't miss it.

2ND MAN (*in a low voice*). Come on away.

1ST MAN. Ah, well——

WILLIE. It's the only chance you'll have.

1ST MAN. Thank you, but we want to see the pictures to-night.

WILLIE. They'll be here till the end of the week—this man is a patriot—as great as Emmet or—or Stephens or Tone——

1ST MAN. Yes, yes. We'll be going, I think.

They go out.

WILLIE. It's pretty hopeless, isn't it ?

ROSE. Yes . . . it'll break his heart.

WILLIE. I suppose it's no use trying to make a start down here, though yesterday—this morning even—several members told me they were coming to-night. I don't know what can have happened to them. Never mind, Rose ; it only means that he'll have to go away up to Dublin and start there.

ROSE. You'll go with him.

WILLIE. Of course.

ROSE. I'm going too.

WILLIE. You, Rose ?

ROSE. Yes, he's been deserted by every one. I'm going to stand by him.

WILLIE. Will you ever be strong enough ?

ROSE. Oh, I'm much better—oh, Willie, it's what

we've always dreamt about to be doing something—something definite for Ireland.

WILLIE. Yes. And I sometimes was afraid it could never happen. I'm glad I'll have to give up Hughes. I want to feel I'm cutting myself right away from that money-making common, commercial life. Hughes gave me a rise this morning, Rose. He's sending me over to Bradyfield—he says I'll be manager there some day if I keep steady. Oh, in a few more years I'd have been so entangled in this business I'd never have broken free.

ROSE. You're giving up wealth and position.

WILLIE. And you're giving up a home.

ROSE. Yes.

JIM (*appearing on the platform*). Here's Mr. Nugent now, he's after coming in the side door.

ROSE. Oh, what can we do, what can we do? Willie, we mustn't let him come into the room—can't we tell him the meeting's put off—anything. (*O'Mahony appears.*) Keep him back, Peter, don't let him come in.

JAMES (*appearing*). Why, Rose, what is the matter?

ROSE (*hysterically*). It's all right, father, it's all right—it's only the wrong night, they're all coming—all coming—to-morrow—we must go home now—we must—we must—

O'MAHONY. Hush, Rose, hush . . . You see, James, there's no one here.

JAMES. No one here.

ROSE. It's not the night—to-morrow—

O'MAHONY. Hush, Rose . . . They don't want to hear you speak, James, Do you understand, they don't want to hear you speak.

JAMES. They do, they do. They've been kept away against their will.

O'MAHONY. No, no, James, there's been no force used, but you've been going about all the week talking of arming and drilling until people are tired of it. They are tired even of laughing at you.

JAMES. You'll never get me to believe that the spirit that animated the men of '48 and '67 is dead.

O'MAHONY. Not dead, James, but grown wise. Ireland is going to be very prosperous, very well-to-do one of these days, but she's never going to fight again. She's got courage still, but it's a different sort of courage. She's got to fight her own self now. I drilled secretly twenty years ago for Ireland, now I make bread for Ireland—that's progress. Come, and join me in the bakery. (*James moves away with an impatient gesture.*) I'm not laughing at you, I know what you're suffering. I didn't give up myself without a struggle.

JAMES. Do you think I'm going to go back now? Do you think because a few fools in a country town laugh at me and pay no attention to me, I'm going to give up what I've spent my life for?

O'MAHONY. What can you do?

JAMES. I'll go to Dublin. There I'll find some of the old friends, they'll help me.

WILLIE. I knew it.

O'MAHONY. Yes. You'll find Brennan—who spends all his time in public-houses—gassing about his patriotism with every glass he takes; you'll find Regan sponging on his relations and never doing a stroke of work—those are all the old friends you'll find there. I tell you, you'll not find a man in Ireland to follow you.

WILLIE. There's where you're wrong, Mr. O'Mahony. Mr. Nugent, I'm with you heart and soul, and I'll follow you wherever you go.

O'MAHONY. I thought you had more sense, Willie.

WILLIE. Don't mind about this meeting, sir, it means nothing. Let's go away at once.

ROSE. And—father—I'm coming with you.

JAMES. You, Rose?

ROSE. Yes. I can be some use, can't I? I'm not very strong—but you said yourself the other day that women must play a large part in building up a nation. Can't I help?

JAMES. Of course you can, dear.

O'MAHONY. James, it's madness, taking away Rose with you. Why, she'll never stand it. She'll break down in a week.

JAMES. That's enough, O'Mahony.

O'MAHONY (*under his breath*). Wait till Ann hears this.

WILLIE. Oh, this letter came for you

JAMES (*looking at signature*). Ah, from John Kearney . . . Called away to Tipperary on important business . . . sorry can't be here. . . The coward, the coward!

O'MAHONY. James, you make us all feel cowards. When we see you we remember all the hopes and plans we had when we were young—long ago.

JAMES. I'll revive them for you. It's not too late, Peter.

O'MAHONY. It is too late. It was too late when we were young. You and I were born too late.

JAMES. Were we, I wonder?

O'MAHONY. Yes, forty years too late. What a chance you'd have had sixty years ago. You'll never get that sort of chance now.

JAMES (*suddenly beginning to lose heart*). Won't I . . . Peter, are you right? Is it too late—am I the last patriot?

Mrs. Sullivan comes in quickly.

MRS. SULLIVAN. Is Willie here. Where's Willie? Ah, there you are, Willie.

WILLIE. What's happened, mother?

MRS. SULLIVAN. Your father—

WILLIE. Again?

MRS. SULLIVAN. No, no, it's not that, it's worse; he's had a sort of a fit, but he's better now. The doctor's with him, and I ran across for you.

O'MAHONY. Oh, Mrs. Sullivan, how did it happen?

WILLIE. Mother!

MRS. SULLIVAN. It was when he read the letter. It made him so angry, and then—

O'MAHONY. What letter ?

MRS. SULLIVAN. The one from Ann giving us notice.

O'MAHONY. Oh !

WILLIE. Notice ?

MRS. SULLIVAN. We owe three years' rent. We'll be sold up.

WILLIE. Sold up ?

JAMES. What ?

WILLIE. I don't understand.

O'MAHONY. Mrs. Nugent talked of doing this the other day, but I hoped she wouldn't at present.

MRS. SULLIVAN (*crying*). I never thought she'd do it on me—I never thought sh'd do it on me. Of course I know we owe her money, but for the sake of old times I thought . . . I thought . . .

WILLIE. Mother, mother, don't.

MRS. SULLIVAN. Oh, Willie, we'll be sold up. You're all I've got to hold on to now. Oh, thank God, you've got your good place with Hughes. He told me this afternoon about your rise, and that you were going to Bradyfield. It's like the hand of God. We'll all go away there and live together—I'll get lodgers and maybe we'll manage all right—come home, Willie.

WILLIE. You mean—there's nothing to live on but what I earn ?

MRS. SULLIVAN. Yes, but it will be enough, Willie, we'll make it do, when we've sold everything there may be something left—but never mind about that, come home now to your father. Oh, my poor Dan. (*Goes.*)

WILLIE. I see . . . How—how beastly. I'm coming, mother. Mr. Nugent, I can't come with you at present ; I've got to stay, you see, and look after them. I'm—I'm—Rose, I'll never get free now. (*Goes.*)

ROSE. Oh, poor Willie.

JAMES. It's shameful of Ann, shameful. How can she be such a grabber ?

O'MAHONY. She's in her right.

JAMES. Oh, her right. Daniel Sullivan was one of my

most trusted comrades. She mustn't do it, I won't let her.

O'MAHONY. You can't stop her.

JAMES. I can. I will. Oh, you've all so changed since I was in prison. I don't know any of you, you're all against me. (*Ann comes in.*) Ann, how could you do such a thing to poor Dan Sullivan?

ANN. What? Do what?

JAMES. Give him notice, sell him up. He's had a stroke—he's dying perhaps.

ANN. I'm sorry to hear that.

JAMES. You must write at once and tell them they can stay. Dan Sullivan mustn't be treated like that.

ANN. I'm sorry, but they've got to go.

JAMES. Why?

ANN. I've lost a lot of money on that house——

JAMES. Money. You think of nothing but money. I thought Mrs. Sullivan was your friend, Ann?

ANN. If she wasn't she'd have been out of that house three years ago.

JAMES. You're rich, Ann. You've any amount of money put away in the Bank, more than you can spend, you usen't to be a miser.

ANN. I'm not a miser.

JAMES. What are you hoarding it up for?

ANN. Not for myself.

JAMES. Who for, then?

ANN. Rose.

JAMES. Rose?

ANN. If I died to-morrow could she go out and earn her bread like another?

JAMES. Oh . . . I see what you mean. But you can be generous now. I'm taking her off your hands, she's going away with me.

ANN. Away. Where?

JAMES. To Dublin. I'm going to open my campaign in Dublin. Rose is coming to help me.

ANN. James, you don't know what you're talking about.

JAMES. Rose has said she'll come with me.

ANN. Nonsense, she can't. Think of her health, James.

JAMES. She is ready to come.

ANN. Oh, Peter, can't you explain to him—he doesn't seem to understand ;

O'MAHONY. I don't think you know, James, how very delicate Rose is.

ANN. It would kill her, that sort of life would kill her—I know what it is—she needs every care and attention—she can't do anything for herself—she can't put on her clothes, she can't take them off.

ROSE. Father would help me.

ANN. No, no, no, I'm not going to let you be taken from me—it's madness.

JAMES. You've come between us before, you've kept her away from me for eighteen years—you're not to do it again, Ann, I won't let you.

ROSE. I want to go, mother.

ANN. You can't have Rose. I won't let her go. You have no consideration for her or you'd never suggest such a thing.

JAMES. I am thinking of my country. If patriotism demands——

ANN. Oh, don't talk to me of patriotism—I'm sick of it. It's made Sullivan a bankrupt ; it's made Brennan a drunkard ; you a murderer ; its destroyed my happiness ; it's made Rose a cripple.

JAMES. Ann !

ANN. It's true, it's true. She's a cripple to-day because of your mad patriotic selfishness.

JAMES. Ann, how can you say such a terrible thing ?

O'MAHONY. Mrs. Nugent, please—

ANN. No, I won't be quiet—I wasn't going to tell him, I was going to spare him that—but now when he comes to snatch Rose away, I'll hide it no longer. Do you remember that summer of '93, you knew I was going to have a child, you knew how nervous I was about it—

wouldn't any other man have been a little considerate to his wife at such a time—but you—you told me that Foley might betray us, that he must be killed—when he was found shot I knew you had killed him—when you fled from the police I knew where you hid—when you came to our house was it to see me, to find out how I was? No, you came to burn some papers I had, and when the police surrounded the house did you go out and say, "My wife is ill, I give myself up to prevent you disturbing her." No, you fought to the end, and from my bedroom window—my bedroom window—as I lay in bed you fired your last shot. You were dragged from my room. And when in the morning I looked at the crippled, prematurely born child at my side I knew you were the cause of it.

JAMES. Ann!

ANN. She's lived in spite of you. I've had years and years of unceasing watching and care—I've fought and fought for her life, and I'm not going to let you come in now and rob me of her. You've crippled her but you shan't kill her, you shan't.

JAMES. Ann, Ann—how horrible—

ROSE (*going to him*). Don't, father, don't.

JAMES (*covering his face with his hands*). Go away, go away. I can never look at you again.

O'MAHONY. James. (*He stops, there is silence.*)

Bob and Harry come in.

BOB. Well, well, nobody here? I didn't think there would be. You know, James, I found there was hardly anyone coming to the meeting, and then this morning I heard the Canon had just come home—he's been in Palestine.

HARRY. No, Egypt.

BOB. Ah, well, it's all the same, and before he went he promised us a lecture when he came back, so I sent a message to know will he speak, and he will to-morrow night.

HARRY. And there'll be limelight views with it.

BOB. So I put off any few who were coming to-night,

and they've all promised to come and hear the Canon to-morrow—it'll be welcoming him home again. We're to have a sort of *conversazione*, there'll be tea at seven—oh, Ann, you'll want to send down some cakes and things from the shop—and then a little address and a few Irish songs and a little step-dancing, and then the lecture on Egypt.

HARRY. And I've just been sent that "Freeman" I wanted! that's splendid? isn't it. Where's Jimmy?
(*Goes up to platform.*)

BOB. I suppose you're a bit disappointed at things turning out like this, but what else could you expect—and indeed I've more good news for you. Who should I meet and I going about telling people of the meeting to-morrow but Major Moriarty, and he was asking me all about you, and he wants you to go out and be clerk in his co-operative store at Lusk.

JAMES. Me?

BOB. Of course I said you'd be delighted to go, isn't it a splendid thing! that's forty or fifty pounds a year—I think that's most satisfactory, most satisfactory. Jim, Jim, where are you?

JIM (*appearing on platform*). Here, sir.

BOB. You can shut up, Jim; there won't be any meeting to-night; but there'll be one to-morrow and I'll be down here at six; there's going to be a tea to Canon Murphy, and a meeting after it—at six, mind, I'll be down.

JIM. Very good, sir.

BOB. And listen here. (*He talks apart*).

O'MAHONY. Say something to him, Ann; look at him.

ANN. James, come home.

JAMES. Oh, Ann!

ANN. We're both old, James, we'd like to undo the past, but we can't. Come home.

ROSE (*softly*). I'll always believe in you.

JAMES. My poor, poor child.

O'MAHONY. Go home with them, James.

JAMES (*getting up—and he moves and looks like an old*

man—he catches O'Mahony's arm). I've killed a man, I've crippled a child, I've got myself shut up for eighteen years—God knows what good came of it all—but—Peter—I meant—I tried . . . I know I meant right—and in prison my cell used to be filled with the sad faces of men like me who had given everything for Ireland—they wouldn't have come to me, would they? if I hadn't been of their company. They are here now—I see them all around me—there is Wolfe Tone, and there is . . . oh, quiet watching faces, I have tried—tried as you tried—and been broken . . .

James, Ann, Rose, and O'Mahony go out.

BOB. That's all right, Jim; don't forget now, six o'clock—you can put out the lights—and of course we'll want a kettle boiled and the cups and saucers. Good-night. Come on, Harry.

HARRY. I'm coming. Good-night, Jim.

BOB (*going out*). Most satisfactory, most satisfactory.

JIM. Good-night to you. (*Looks at watch*) Only twenty past eight. I can go and see the pictures after all. (*He switches off the lights by degrees.*)

When the stage is quite dark the CURTAIN falls.

"Patriots" was first produced in the Abbey Theatre on April 11th, 1912, with the following cast:

PETER O'MAHONY	..	..	..	<i>Sydney J. Morgan</i>
ANN NUGENT	..	..	..	<i>Sara Allgood</i>
ROSE NUGENT	..	..	..	<i>Kathleen Drago</i>
MRS. SULLIVAN	..	..	..	<i>Eileen O'Doherty</i>
BOB	..	..	..	<i>Arthur Sinclair</i>
HARRY	..	..	..	<i>J. A. O'Rourke</i>
WILLIE SULLIVAN	..	..	..	<i>C. Power</i>
JAMES NUGENT	..	..	..	<i>Fred O'Donovan</i>
FATHER KEARNEY	..	..	..	<i>J. M. Kerrigan</i>
DAN SULLIVAN	..	..	..	<i>Philip Quiney</i>
JIM POWELL	..	..	..	<i>J. M. Kerrigan</i>
FIRST YOUNG MAN	..	..	..	<i>U. Wright</i>
SECOND YOUNG MAN	..	..	..	<i>Philip Quiney</i>

The Play was produced by the Author.

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